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WOMAN AND WAR

IT may be said, "Granting fully that you are right, that, as woman's old fields of labour slip from her, she must grasp the new, or must become wholly dependent on her sexual function alone, all the other elements of human nature in her becoming atrophied and arrested through lack of exercise: and, granting that her evolution being arrested, the evolution of the whole race will be also

arrested in her person : granting all this to the full, and allowing that the bulk of human labour tends to become more and more intellectual and less and less purely mechanical, as perfected machinery takes the place of crude human exertion ; and that therefore if woman is to be saved from degeneration and parasitism, and the body of humanity from arrest, she must receive a training which will cultivate all the intellectual and all the physical faculties with which she is endowed, and be allowed freely to employ them ; nevertheless, would it not be possible,

and perhaps be well, that a dividing line of some kind should be drawn between the occupations of men and of women? Would it not, for example, be possible that woman should retain agriculture, textile manufacture, trade, domestic management, the education of youth, and medicine, in addition to child-bearing, as her exclusive fields of toil; while to the male should be left the study of abstract science, law and war, and statecraft; as of old, man took war and the chase, and woman absorbed the further labours of life? Why should there not be again a

fair and even division in the field of social labour?"

Superficially, this suggestion appears rational, having at least this to recommend it—that it appears to harmonize with the course of human evolution in the past; but closely examined, it will, we think, be found to have no practical or scientific basis, and to be out of harmony with the conditions of modern life. In ancient and primitive societies, the mere larger size and muscular strength of man, and woman's incessant physical activity in child-bearing and suckling and rearing

the young, made almost inevitable a certain sexual division of labour in almost all countries, save perhaps in ancient Egypt.[1] Woman naturally took the heavy agricultural and domestic labours, which were yet more consistent with the continual dependence of infant life on her own, than those of man in war and the chase. There was nothing artificial in such a division ; it threw the heaviest burden of the most

[1] The division of labour between the sexes in ancient Egypt and other exceptional countries, is a matter of much interest, which cannot here be entered on.

wearying and unexciting forms of social labour on woman, but under it both sexes laboured in a manner essential to the existence of society, and each transmitted to the other, through inheritance, the fruit of its slowly expanding and always exerted powers ; and the race progressed.

Individual women might sometimes, and even often, become the warrior chief of a tribe ; the King of Ashantee might train his terrible regiment of females ; and men might now and again plant and weave for their children : but in the main, and in most societies, the division of

labour was just, natural, beneficial; and it was inevitable that such a division should take place. Were to-day a band of civilized men, women, and infants thrown down absolutely naked and defenceless in some desert, and cut off hopelessly from all external civilized life, undoubtedly very much the old division of labour would, at least for a time, reassert itself; men would look about for stones and sticks with which to make weapons to repel wild beasts and enemies, and would go a-hunting meat and fighting savage enemies and tend the beasts

when tamed : [1] women would suckle their children, cook the meat men brought, build shelters, look for roots and if possible cultivate them ; there certainly would be no parasite in the society ; the woman who refused to labour for her offspring, and the man who refused to hunt or defend society, would not be supported by their fellows, would soon be extinguished by want. As wild beasts were extinguished and others tamed and the materials

[1] The young captured animals would probably be tamed and reared by the women.

for war improved, fewer men would be needed for hunting and war; then they would remain at home and aid in building and planting; many women would retire into the house to perfect domestic toil and handicrafts, and on a small scale the common ancient evolution of society would practically repeat itself. But for the present, we see no such natural and spontaneous division of labour based on natural sexual distinctions in the new fields of intellectual or delicately skilled manual labour, which are taking the place of the old.

It is possible, though at present there is nothing to give indication of such a fact, and it seems highly improbable, that, in some subtle manner now incomprehensible, there might tend to be a subtle correlation between that condition of the brain and nervous system which accompanies ability in the direction of certain modern forms of mental, social labour, and the particular form of reproductive function possessed by an individual. It may be that, inexplicable as it seems, there may ultimately be found to be some connection between that

condition of the brain and nervous system which fits the individual for the study of the higher mathematics, let us say, and the nature of their sex attributes. The mere fact that, of the handful of women who, up to the present, have received training and been allowed to devote themselves to abstract study, several have excelled in the higher mathematics, proves of necessity no pre-eminent tendency on the part of the female sex in the direction of mathematics, as compared to labour in the fields of statesmanship, administration, or law; as into these fields

there has been practically no admittance for women. It is sometimes stated, that as several women of genius in modern times have sought to find expression for their creative powers in the art of fiction, there must be some inherent connection in the human brain between the ovarian sex function and the art of fiction. The fact is, that modern fiction being merely a description of human life in any of its phases, and being the only art that can be exercised without special training or special appliances, and produced in the moments

stolen from the multifarious, brain-destroying occupations which fill the average woman's life, they have been driven to find this outlet for their powers as the only one presenting itself. How far otherwise might have been the directions in which their genius would naturally have expressed itself can be known only partially even to the women themselves ; what the world has lost by that compulsory expression of genius, in a form which may not have been its most natural form of expression, or only one of its forms, no one can ever know. Even in the little

third-rate novelist whose works cumber the ground, we see often a pathetic figure, when we recognize that beneath that failure in a complex and difficult art, may lie buried a sound legislator, an able architect, an original scientific investigator, or a good judge. Scientifically speaking, it is as unproven that there is any organic relation between the brain of the female and the production of art in the form of fiction, as that there is an organic relation between the hand of woman and a typewriting machine. Both the creative writer and the typist, in their

respective spheres, are merely finding outlets for their powers in the direction of least resistance. The tendency of women at the present day to undertake certain forms of labour, proves only that in the crabbed, walled-in, and bound conditions surrounding woman at the present day, these are the lines along which action is most possible to her.

It may possibly be that in future ages, when the male and female forms have been placed in like intellectual conditions, with like stimuli, like training, and like re-

wards, that some aptitudes may be found running parallel with the line of sex function when humanity is viewed as a whole. It may possibly be that, when the historian of the future looks back over the history of the intellectually freed and active sexes for countless generations, that a decided preference of the female intellect for mathematics, engineering, or statecraft may be made clear; and that a like marked inclination in the male to excel in acting, music, or astronomy may by careful and large comparison be shown. But, for the present, we have no

adequate scientific data from which to draw any conclusion, and any attempt to divide the occupations in which male and female intellects and wills should be employed, must be to attempt a purely artificial and arbitrary division : a division not more rational and scientific than an attempt to determine by the colour of his eyes and the shape and strength of his legs, whether a lad should be an astronomer or an engraver. Those physical differences among mankind which divide races and nations—not merely those differences, enormously greater

as they are generally, than any physical differences between male and female of the same race, which divide the Jew and the Swede, the Japanese and the Englishman, but even those subtle physical differences which divide closely allied races such as the English and German—often appear to be allied with certain subtle differences in intellectual aptitudes. Yet even with regard to these differences, it is almost impossible to determine scientifically in how far they are the result of national traditions, environment, and education, and in

how far the result of real differences in organic conformation.[1]

[1] In thinking of physical sex differences, the civilized man of modern times has always to guard himself against being unconsciously misled by the very exaggerated external sex differences which our unnatural method of sex clothing and dressing the hair produces. The unclothed and natural human male and female bodies are not more divided from each other than those of the lion and lioness. Our remote Saxon ancestors, with their great, almost naked, white bodies and flowing hair worn long by both sexes, were but little distinguished from each other ; while among their modern descendants the short hair, darkly clothed, manifestly two-legged male differs absolutely from the usually long-haired, colour bedizened, much beskirted female. Were the structural differences

No study of the mere physical differences between individuals of different races would have enabled us to arrive at any knowledge of

between male and female really one-half as marked as the artificial visual differences, they would be greater than those dividing, not merely any species of man from another, but as great as those which divide orders in the animal world. Only a mind exceedingly alert and analytical can fail ultimately to be misled by habitual visual misrepresentation. There is not, probably. one man or woman in twenty thousand who is not powerfully influenced in modern life in their conception of the differences, physical and intellectual, dividing the human male and female, by the grotesque exaggerations of modern attire and artificial manners.

their mental aptitude; nor does the fact that certain individuals of a given human variety have certain aptitudes form a rational ground for compelling all individuals of that variety to undertake a certain form of labour.

No analysis, however subtle, of the physical conformation of the Jew could have suggested *a priori*, and still less could have proved, apart from ages of practical experience, that, running parallel with any physical characteristics which may distinguish him from his fellows, was an innate and unique intellectual

gift in the direction of religion. The fact that, during three thousand years, from Moses to Isaiah, through Jesus and Paul, on to Spinoza, the Jewish race has produced men who have given half the world its religious faith and impetus, proves that, somewhere and somehow, whether connected organically with that physical organization that marks the Jew, or as the result of his traditions and training, there does go this gift in the matter of religion. Yet, on the other hand, we find millions of Jews who are totally and markedly deficient in it, and

to base any practical legislation for the individual even on this proven intellectual aptitude of the race as a whole would be manifestly as ridiculous as abortive. Yet more markedly, with the German—no consideration of his physical peculiarities, though it proceeded to the subtlest analysis of nerve, bone, and muscle, could in the present stage of our knowledge have proved to us what generations of experience appear to have proved, that, with that organization which constitutes the German, goes an unique aptitude for music. There is

always the possibility of mistaking the result of training and external circumstance for inherent tendency, but when we consider the passion for music which the German has shown, and when we consider that the greatest musicians the world has seen, from Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart to Wagner, have been of that race, it appears highly probable that such a correlation between the German organization and the intellectual gift of music does exist. Similar intellectual peculiarities seem to be connoted by the external differences

which mark off other races from each other. Nevertheless, were persons of all of these nationalities gathered in one colony, any attempt to legislate for their restriction to certain forms of intellectual labour on the ground of their apparently proved national aptitudes or disabilities, would be regarded as insane. To insist that all Jews, and none but Jews, should lead and instruct in religious matters; that all Englishmen, and none but Englishmen, should engage in trade; that each German should make his living by music, and

none but a German allowed to practise it, would drive to despair the unfortunate individual Englishman, whose most marked deficiency might be in the direction of finance and bartering trade power; the Jew, whose religious instincts might be entirely rudimentary; or the German, who could not distinguish one note from another; and the society as a whole would be an irremediable loser, in one of the heaviest of all forms of social loss—the loss of the full use of the highest capacities of all its members.

It may be that with sexes as

with races, the subtlest physical difference between them may have their fine mental correlatives; but no abstract consideration of the human body in relation to its functions of sex can, in the present state of our knowledge, show us what intellectual capacities tend to vary with sexual structure, and nothing in the present or past condition of male and female give us more than the very faintest possible indication of the relation of their intellectual aptitudes and their sexual functions. And even were it proved by centuries of

experiment that with the possession of the uterine function of sex tends to go exceptional intellectual capacity in the direction of mathematics rather than natural history, or an inclination for statecraft rather than for mechanical invention; were it proved that, generally speaking and as a whole, out of twenty thousand women devoting themselves to law and twenty thousand to medicine, they tended to achieve relatively more in the field of law than of medicine, there would yet be no possible healthy or rational ground for restricting

the activities of the individual female to that line in which the average female appeared rather more frequently to excel.[1]

That even one individual in a society should be debarred from

[1] Minds not keenly analytical are always apt to mistake mere correlation of appearance with causative sequence. We have heard it gravely asserted that between potatoes, pigs, mud cabins and Irishmen there was an organic connection: but we who have lived in Colonies, know that within two generations the pure-bred descendant of the mud cabiner becomes often the successful politician, wealthy financier, or great judge; and shows no more predilection for potatoes, pigs, and mud cabins than men of any other race.

undertaking that form of social toil for which it is most fitted, makes an unnecessary deficit in the general social assets. That one male Froebel should be prohibited or hampered in his labour as an educator of infancy, on the ground that infantile instruction was the field of the female ; that one female with gifts in the direction of state administration, should be compelled to instruct an infants' school, perhaps without the slightest gift for so doing, is a running to waste of social life-blood.

Free trade in labour and equality

of training, intellectual or physical, is essential if the organic aptitudes of a sex or class are to be determined. And our demand to-day is that natural conditions inexorably, but beneficently, may determine the labours of each individual, and not artificial restrictions.

As there is no need to legislate that Hindus, being generally supposed to have a natural incapacity for field sports, shall not betake themselves to them—for, if they have no capacity, they will fail; and, as in spite of the Hindus' supposed general incapacity for

sport, it is possible for an individual Hindu to become the noted batsman of his age ; so, also, there is no need to legislate that woman should be restricted in her choice of fields of labour ; for the organic incapacity of the individual, if it exist, will legislate far more powerfully than any artificial, legal, or social obstruction can do ; and it may be that the one individual in ten thousand who selects a field not generally sought by his fellows will enrich humanity by the result of an especial genius. Allowing all to start from the one point in

the world of intellectual culture and labour, with our ancient Mother Nature sitting as umpire, distributing the prizes and scratching from the lists the incompetent, is all we demand, but we demand it determinedly. Throw the puppy into the water: if it swims, well; if it sinks, well; but do not tie a rope round its throat and weight it with a brick, and then assert its incapacity to keep afloat.

For the present our cry is, "*We take all labour for our province!*"

From the judge's seat to the

legislator's chair; from the statesman's closet to the merchant's office; from the chemist's laboratory to the astronomer's tower, there is no post or form of toil for which it is not our intention to attempt to fit ourselves; and there is no closed door we do not intend to force open; and there is no fruit in the garden of knowledge it is not our determination to eat. Acting in us, and through us, nature we know will mercilessly expose to us our deficiencies in the field of human toil, and reveal to us our powers. *And, for*

to-day, we take all labour for our province !

But, it may then be said : "What of war, that struggle of the human creature to attain its ends by physical force and at the price of the life of others : will you take part in that also ?" We reply : Yes ; more particularly in that field we intend to play our part. We have always borne part of the weight of war, and the major part. It is not merely that in primitive times we suffered from the destruction of the fields we tilled and the houses we built ; or

that in later times as domestic labourers and producers, though unwaged, we, in taxes and material loss and additional labour, paid as much as our males towards the cost of war; nor is it that in a comparatively insignificant manner, as nurses of the wounded in modern times, or now and again as warrior chieftainesses and leaders in primitive and other societies, we have borne our part; nor is it even because the spirit of resolution in its women, and their willingness to endure, has in all ages again and again largely determined the

fate of a race that goes to war, that we demand our controlling right where war is concerned. Our relation to war is far more intimate, personal, and indissoluble than this. Men have made boomerangs, bows, swords, or guns with which to destroy one another; we have made the men who destroyed and were destroyed! We have in all ages produced, at an enormous cost, the primal munition of war, without which no other would exist. There is no battlefield on earth, nor ever has been, howsoever covered with

slain, which it has not cost the women of the race more in actual bloodshed and anguish to supply, than it has cost the men who lie there. *We pay the first cost on all human life.*

In supplying the men for the carnage of a battlefield, women have not merely lost actually more blood, and gone through a more acute anguish and weariness, in the long months of bearing and in the final agony of child-birth, than has been experienced by the men who cover it ; but, in the long months and years of rearing that

follow, the women of the race go through a long, patiently endured strain which no knapsacked soldier on his longest march has ever more than equalled; while, even in the matter of death, in all civilized societies, the probability that the average woman will die in child-birth is immeasurably greater than the probability that the average male will die in battle.

There is, perhaps, no woman, whether she have borne children, or be merely potentially a child-bearer, who could look down upon a battlefield covered with slain, but

the thought would rise in her, "So many mothers' sons! So many bodies brought into the world to lie there! So many months of weariness and pain while bones and muscles were shaped within; so many hours of anguish and struggle that breath might be; so many baby mouths drawing life at woman's breasts;—all this, that men might lay with glazed eyeballs, and swollen bodies, and fixed, blue, unclosed mouths, and great limbs tossed—this, that an acre of ground might be manured with human flesh, that next year's grass

or poppies or karoo bushes may spring up greener and redder, where they have lain, or that the sand of a plain may have a glint of white bones!" And we cry, "Without an inexorable cause, this should not be!" No woman who is a woman says of a human body, "It is nothing!"

On that day, when the woman takes her place beside the man in the governance and arrangement of external affairs of her race will also be that day that heralds the death of war as a means of arranging human differences. No tinsel of

trumpets and flags will ultimately seduce women into the insanity of recklessly destroying life, or gild the wilful taking of life with any other name than that of murder, whether it be the slaughter of the million or of one by one. And this will be, not because with the sexual function of maternity necessarily goes in the human creature a deeper moral insight, or a loftier type of social instinct than that which accompanies the paternal. Men have in all ages led as nobly as women in many paths of heroic virtue, and toward the higher

social sympathies; in certain ages, being freer and more widely cultured, they have led further and better. The fact that woman has no inherent all-round moral superiority over her male companion, or naturally on all points any higher social instinct, is perhaps most clearly exemplified by one curious very small fact: the two terms signifying intimate human relationships which in almost all human languages bear the most sinister and antisocial significance are both terms which have as their root the term "mother," and denote feminine

relationships—the words "mother-in-law" and "step-mother."

In general humanity, in the sense of social solidarity, and in magnanimity, the male has continually proved himself at least the equal of the female.

Nor will women shrink from war because they lack courage. Earth's women of every generation have faced suffering and death with an equanimity that no soldier on a battlefield has ever surpassed and few have equalled; and where war has been to preserve life, or land, or freedom, unparasitized and labouring

women have in all ages known how to bear an active part, and die.

Nor will woman's influence militate against war because in the future woman will not be able physically to bear her part in it. The smaller size of her muscle, which would severely have disadvantaged her when war was conducted with a battle-axe or sword and hand to hand, would now little or at all affect her, If intent on training for war, she might acquire the skill for guiding a Maxim or shooting down a foe with a Lee-Metford at four thousand yards as ably as any male ;

and undoubtedly, it has not been only the peasant girl of France, who has carried latent and hid within her person the gifts that make the supreme general. If our European nations should continue in their present semi-civilized condition, which makes war possible, for a few generations longer, it is highly probable that as financiers, as managers of the commissariat department, as inspectors of provisions and clothing for the army, women will play a very leading part; and that the nation which is the first to employ its women so may be placed at a

vast advantage over its fellows in time of war. It is not because of woman's cowardice, incapacity, nor, above all, because of her general superior virtue, that she will end war when her voice is fully, finally, and clearly heard in the governance of states—it is because, on this one point, and on this point almost alone, the knowledge of woman, simply as woman, is superior to that of man; she knows the history of human flesh; she knows its cost; he does not.[1]

[1] It is noteworthy that even Catharine of Russia, a ruler and statesman of a virile

In a besieged city, it might well happen that men in the streets might seize upon statues and marble carvings from public buildings and galleries and hurl them in to stop the breaches made in their ramparts by the enemy, unconsideringly and merely because they came first to hand, not valuing them more than had they been paving-stones. But

and uncompromising type, and not usually troubled with moral scruples, yet refused with indignation the offer of Frederick of Prussia to pay her heavily for a small number of Russian recruits in an age when the hiring out of soldiers was common among the sovereigns of Europe.

one man could not do this—the sculptor! He, who, though there might be no work of his own chisel among them, yet knew what each of these works of art had cost, knew by experience the long years of struggle and study and the infinitude of toil which had gone to the shaping of even one limb, to the carving of even one perfected outline, *he* could never so use them without thought or care. Instinctively he would seek to throw in household goods, even gold and silver, all the city held, before he sacrificed its works of art!

Men's bodies are our woman's works of art. Given to us power of control, we will never carelessly throw them in to fill up the gaps in human relationships made by international ambitions and greeds. The thought would never come to us as woman, "Cast in men's bodies; settle the thing so!" Arbitration and compensation would as naturally occur to her as cheaper and simpler methods of bridging the gaps in national relationships, as to the sculptor it would occur to throw in anything rather than statuary, though he might be driven to that at last!

This is one of those phases of human life, not very numerous, but very important, towards which the man as man, and the woman as woman, on the mere ground of their different sexual function with regard to reproduction, stand, and must stand, at a somewhat differing angle. The physical creation of human life, which, in as far as the male is concerned, consists in a few moments of physical pleasure; to the female must always signify months of pressure and physical endurance, crowned with danger to life. To the male, the giving

of life is a laugh; to the female, blood, anguish, and sometimes death. Here we touch one of the few yet important differences between man and woman as such.

The twenty thousand men prematurely slain on a field of battle, mean, to the women of their race, twenty thousand human creatures to be borne within them for months, given birth to in anguish, fed from their breasts and reared with toil, if the numbers of the tribe and the strength of the nation are to be maintained. In nations continually at war, incessant and

unbroken child-bearing is by war imposed on all women if the state is to survive ; and whenever war occurs, if numbers are to be maintained, there must be an increased child-bearing and rearing. This throws upon woman as woman a war tax, compared with which all that the male expends in military preparations is comparatively light.

The relations of the female towards the production of human life influences undoubtedly even her relation towards animal and all life. "It is a fine day, let us go out and kill something!" cries the

typical male of certain races, instinctively. "There is a living thing, it will die if it is not cared for," says the average woman, almost equally instinctively. It is true, that the woman will sacrifice as mercilessly, as cruelly, the life of a hated rival or an enemy, as any male; *but she always knows what she is doing, and the value of the life she takes!* There is no light-hearted, careless enjoyment in the sacrifice of life to the normal woman; her instinct, instructed by practical experience, steps in to prevent it. She always knows

what life costs; and that it is more easy to destroy than create it.

It is also true, that, from the loftiest standpoint, the condemnation of war which has arisen in the advancing human spirit, is in no sense related to any particular form of sex function. The man and the woman alike, who with Isaiah on the hills of Palestine, or the Indian Buddha under his bo-tree, have seen the essential unity of all sentient life; and who therefore see in war but a symptom of that crude disco-ordination of life on earth, not yet at one with itself,

which affects humanity in these early stages of its growth: and who are compelled to regard as the ultimate goal of the race, though yet perhaps far distant across the ridges of innumerable coming ages, that harmony between all forms of conscious life, metaphorically prefigured by the ancient Hebrew, when he cried, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them!" —to that individual, whether man

or woman, who has reached this standpoint, there is no need for enlightenment from the instincts of the child-bearers of society as such; their condemnation of war, rising not so much from the fact that it is a wasteful destruction of human flesh, as that it is an indication of the non-existence of that co-ordination, the harmony which is summed up in the cry, "My little children, love one another."

But for the vast bulk of humanity, probably for generations to come, the instinctive antagonism of the human child-bearer to reckless

destruction of that which she has at so much cost produced, will be necessary to educate the race to any clear conception of the bestiality and insanity of war.

War will pass when intellectual culture and activity have made possible to the female an equal share in the control and governance of modern national life; it will probably not pass away much sooner; its extinction will not be delayed much longer.

It is especially in the domain of war that we, the bearers of men's bodies, who supply its most valuable

munition, who, not amid the clamour and ardour of battle, but singly, and alone, with a three-in-the-morning courage, shed our blood and face death that the battlefield may have its food, a food more precious to us than our heart's blood; it is we especially, who in the domain of war, have our word to say, a word no man can say for us. It is our intention to enter into the domain of war and to labour there till in the course of generations we have extinguished it.

If to-day we claim all labour for

our province, yet more especially do we claim those fields in which the difference in the reproductive function between man and woman may place male and female at a slightly different angle with regard to certain phases of human life.

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